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The Walking In Traffic Safely (WITS) Program for Preschoolers

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

DEPOSITORY 325

(For Teachers of Two- and Three-Year-Olds)

TD8.8:

Table of Contents

Section	Page
To the Teacher	1
The Developmental Capabilities of the Young Child: What Happens to Two- and Three-Year-Olds in Traffic?	2
Common Preschool Pedestrian Accidents	3
Helping Children Use Their WITS: How the Program Works	5
A Note about the Lessons	6
Lesson 1: Where Is the Street?	7
Lesson 2: Streets Are for Cars	9
Lesson 3: A Walk with Mommy	11
Lesson 4: Super Scott and Super Spot	13
Lesson 5: The Car Game	15
Parent Handout Sheets to Accompany Storybook 1	17
Parent Handout Sheets to Accompany Storybook 2	21
Parent Handout Sheets to Accompany Storybook 3	25
Parent Handout Sheets to Accompany Storybook 4	29
Parent Handout Sheets to Accompany Storybook 5	33

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To the Teacher . . .

Welcome to the Walking In Traffic Safely (WITS) Program for Preschoolers. This guidebook is designed for teachers of two- and three-year-olds. A companion guidebook is available for teachers of four- and five-year-olds.

Traffic safety is everyone's concern. As a caregiver, you are aware of the dangers that await young children in traffic. But do you realize that motor vehicle-related accidents are the major cause of death to preschoolers? According to the National Safety Council, more than 11,000 children under the age of six are killed or injured in pedestrian accidents each year.

To address this problem the WITS Program was created. It was developed by child development specialists at Applied Management Sciences, Inc., under the sponsorship of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) of the Department of Transportation (DOT). The WITS Program was designed to help reduce the chances of preschool children becoming involved in pedestrian traffic accidents. Because most preschool accidents occur in residential urban areas, the focus of the WITS Program is urban areas. The advice given in the materials, however, is useful for children everywhere.

In developing this program, more than 10,000 accident reports from throughout the United States were analyzed to determine what children do that places them in danger. Literature written in this country and abroad was examined. Experts in pedestrian safety and child development were interviewed to find out what measures could be taken to reduce the preschool accident rate. Educational programs of traffic safety in the U.S. and in other countries were also examined.

From all these sources, we have learned the following facts about preschool pedestrian accidents:

- Most preschool accidents fall into five major categories (for more detailed information see the section Common Preschool Pedestrian Accidents). The most common preschool pedestrian accident is called the Dart-Out. Here the child enters the street midblock, usually near parked cars, and does not search for oncoming traffic. In most cases, the child was not attempting to cross the street but entered the roadway to retrieve a ball or was being chased. Research studies indicate that as many as 90 % of street entries by young children are inadequate and unsafe.
- Most children are injured near their homes, often on the very street where they live.
- More than twice as many preschool boys as girls are involved in accidents.
- Most accidents take place in fair weather during warm weather months.
- Most accidents occur in the late afternoon hours, with 3 to 5 p.m. being the peak hours in which children are involved in accidents.

Interestingly, these findings are not unique to this country. Cross-cultural data gathered from Scandinavia, England, Japan, Germany, and New South Wales revealed similar patterns. In all countries, about the same proportion of boys to girls are injured in accidents. The timing, location, and circumstances leading to these accidents also appear similar. Why? We can infer that children the world over react similarly when walking or playing near traffic. Whether they live in Sydney, Oslo, or Washington, D.C., young children seem vulnerable to the dangers of traffic.

This information about the circumstances leading to preschool pedestrian accidents enabled us to develop specific program advice to keep youngsters safe in traffic. This holds the promise of breaking the chain of events that leads to accidents. The WITS Program is a carefully planned curriculum that has been critically reviewed by teachers and parents of preschool children. When used in your classroom, the WITS Program for Preschoolers can help children learn the skills that will make them safer in traffic.

The Developmental Capabilities of the Young Child: What Happens to Two- and Three-Year-Olds in Traffic?

Children who are just learning to be social, to explore their environment, and to test their physical skills find it impossible to always be good pedestrians. They may be eager to learn about traffic safety and truly want to please their parents and teachers by heeding their words. But the temptations of play and the distractions of friends and relatives can be too much. A shiny nickel in the street, a pile of leaves across the road, or a game of catch across the street are hard for a youngster to resist. Suddenly the child forgets all that has been learned. The only thing that matters is that the nickel needs to be picked up, the leaves jumped in, or the game joined. Traffic safety takes a back seat to the here and now. Consider the following:

Because Two- and Three-Year-Olds . . .	**In Traffic They May . . .**
are short in stature . . .	. . . not be able to see over parked cars or hedges into the street.
are just gaining muscle control and coordination . . .	. . . have difficulty walking and looking for cars at the same time.
are attached to members of their family . . .	. . . run into the street after parents or siblings.
are highly emotional . . .	. . . suddenly run across the street to be comforted by a parent.
are filled with curiosity . . .	. . . wander into a road to pick up a hubcap or a toy.
can focus on only one thought at a time . . .	. . . run into a street after a ball without thinking that cars are in the street.
tend to look only at things that interest them . . .	. . . focus on people, animals, or ice cream trucks—not moving cars.
do not possess well-developed powers of memory . . .	. . . have difficulty remembering traffic safety instructions.
have limited vocabularies . . .	. . . misinterpret traffic concepts.

These limitations pose a significant danger to the young child who is walking or playing outside. Research studies have documented the effects of these developmental limitations on the causes of accidents.

Common Preschool Pedestrian Accidents

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has analyzed accidents involving preschoolers and developed a profile of the various types. From their research, we know that the most common urban accident takes place in the midblock area of the street when a child suddenly darts into traffic. Typically, in a Dart-Out accident, a child who is standing or playing in the middle of a block suddenly runs into the street from between parked cars or other obstructions without stopping or looking for oncoming traffic. Neither the driver, whose vision is blocked by the obstruction, nor the child is aware of the other's presence until it is too late to avoid a collision.

The second most common accident involving two- and three-year-olds is known as the "Midblock Dash." As with Dart-Out accidents, a child rushes out into the street from the middle of the block. In Midblock Dash situations, the child is not blocked from the driver's view by an obstruction; the driver sees the child well ahead of time. The problem is that the driver never suspects that the child will suddenly enter the street. In almost every instance, drivers involved in this type of accident say that they thought the accident victim was safe on a sidewalk or in a yard.

Together, Dart-Outs and Midblock Dashes account for two-thirds (67%) of all urban pedestrian accidents involving two- and three-year-olds. Without a doubt, the most dangerous site for these youngsters is in the middle of the block. The figure on the next page shows how serious a problem these midblock accidents are for urban preschoolers.

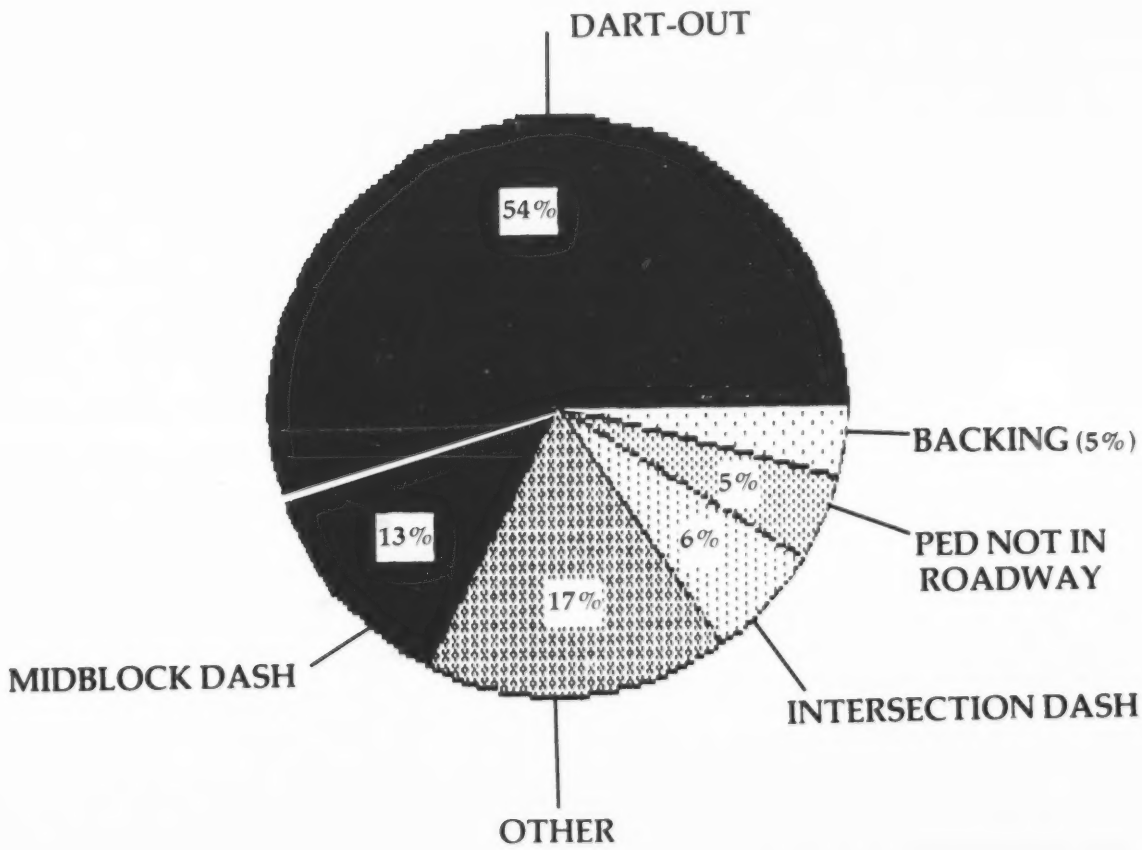
Fewer accidents involving two- and three-year-olds take place in intersections, driveways, alleys, and parking lots. These areas are not as dangerous, but they do account for 11% of accidents involving these youngsters. An intersection-related accident is known as an Intersection Dash. During these accidents the child, who is usually running through an intersection, is struck by a vehicle whose driver did not see the youngster until it was too late to take effective action. Accidents occurring in driveways, alleys, parking lots, private roads, gas stations, and ball fields are known collectively as "Pedestrian Not in Roadway" accidents. These accidents typically occur when a child who is not looking for cars is hit by a driver who did not see or did not expect the child to cross in front of the car. Also included in this category are accidents caused by out-of-control cars that hit a pedestrian standing on a curb.

Another noteworthy accident involving two- and three-year-old pedestrians occurs when a car is backing up. Though backing accidents account for only 5% of accidents, they are a persistent problem. In backing accidents the child, who may be in the street, an intersection, or an off-roadway area, is hit by a vehicle going in reverse. In most reported incidents, the child was not even aware that the backing vehicle was in motion. Although most drivers involved had looked to their rear, they did not perceive the need for evasive action until too late.

These five types of accidents remain the major threat to youngsters throughout the preschool years. At ages two and three, they account for 83% of all pedestrian accidents.* The WITS materials are directly targeted toward reducing these types of accidents.

*The remaining 17% of accidents include vendor-related accidents, turning-vehicle accidents, accidents caused by a child running into a vehicle, and assorted unclassified accidents. None of these accident categories accounts for more than 3% of accidents involving this age group.

Major Urban Pedestrian Accidents Types Involving Two- and Three-Year-Olds



Helping Children Use Their WITS: How the Program Works

The WITS Program for Preschoolers is based on the premise that the incidence of pedestrian accidents involving preschoolers can be reduced if the factors leading to accidents are changed. This can be done by:

(1) modifying the child's actions;

(2) changing the traffic environment;

(3) altering the motorist's behavior.

The WITS Program does not address motorists, but it does deal directly with the first two approaches.

The WITS Program helps to reduce accidents by:

(1) **Teaching children safe walking behaviors.** The beginning books in the WITS series lay the foundation for traffic safety instruction, teaching traffic-related vocabulary and boundaries. Later books teach children specific safe walking skills.

(2) **Making adults more aware of the need for supervising young children near traffic.** Research confirms that most youngsters involved in traffic accidents were not properly supervised at the time of the accident. The WITS series provides appropriate guidelines for supervision.

(3) **Making adults aware of the need for demonstrating safe walking skills.** Children need more than verbal instructions. They need to watch those whom they respect use the advice that is preached. The WITS Program encourages the modeling of safe walking behavior.

At the heart of the WITS Program for two- and three-year-olds are five storybooks on pedestrian safety. These books present a sequential approach to teaching pedestrian safety. Children are given information in an enjoyable format at a rate and level they can understand. To add to the learning potential of the children's materials, this guidebook provides lesson plans to accompany each storybook. Each lesson plan contains: (1) a lesson goal, (2) questions to ask the class about the storybook, (3) activities to reinforce the presented content, (4) skills to teach children to strengthen their developmental capabilities in traffic, (5) ideas for coordinating with parents, and (6) a checklist to assess mastery. At the conclusion of the lessons are handout sheets for parents. These can be duplicated and distributed to the parents of children in your class.

In implementing the WITS Program you can use the materials in various ways. You may wish to:

- **Use the WITS Program as a full course of study.** The WITS materials may be used as a self-contained unit on pedestrian traffic safety. The materials and all of the suggested activities become a complete curriculum on pedestrian safety.
- **Use the WITS Program to augment your ongoing curriculum.** You may find that pedestrian safety relates well to other activities, such as household safety or the need to wear seat belts in cars. If so, weave the WITS materials into these areas.
- **Use the WITS storybooks as you would any other children's literature.** In addition to teaching pedestrian safety, the WITS booklets for children are meant to be used as storybooks. Keep them available for your children in a library corner or on a bookshelf.

Regard the WITS materials as you would any teaching tool: adapt them to the needs of your classroom and your own educational objectives.

A Note about the Lessons . . .

As mentioned, this guidebook is designed for use with two- and three-year-olds. Five storybooks have been developed for this age group. Another four storybooks have been developed for four- and five-year-olds. Lessons covering these books are available in the Instructor's Guide for Teachers of Four- and Five-Year-Olds.

The storybooks covered in this guidebook introduce youngsters to traffic safety concepts and provide them with beginning skills. Storybook 1, Where Is the Street?, is a traffic vocabulary book that reviews key elements in the traffic environment near the child's home. Storybook 2, Streets Are for Cars, introduces the concept of boundaries and how they relate to safe and unsafe places for children. Storybook 3, A Walk with Mommy, presents an overview of the basic procedures involved in crossing the street safely from midblock. In Storybook 4, Super Scott and Super Spot, the consequences of not following safe walking procedures are explored. Storybook 5, The Car Game, provides youngsters with clues for detecting movement in parked cars.

The WITS Program teaches children how to safely cross the street midblock under the supervision of a responsible adult. This does NOT, however, mean that the WITS Program contradicts the time-honored advice of "crossing at the corner." In planning a trip to school, a relative's house, or the store, it is still always safest to **plan** to cross the street at the corner.

With preschoolers, though, most accidents occur during impulsive moments of play—not during a planned trip. Most accidents have a socially-motivated cause: the child has gone to retrieve a toy from the street, to greet a relative, to play with leaves on the curb. In the majority of instances the child made a snap decision to enter the street; there was no thought-out plan that included walking to the corner. For this reason, the WITS Program takes the position that the problem must be attacked where it exists.

This approach is backed by research. A recent study reported that preschool and school-age children exposed to public service announcements and a film on how to cross midblock locations safely experienced significantly fewer midblock accidents. The group with the most improved accident rate was children four to six years old.

A second important reason for teaching children to cross the street midblock is rooted in the immaturity of the young child. Midblock crossings are easier for children to master. At midblock, traffic occurs in only two directions and no lights or signs must be searched for and interpreted. At an intersection, on the other hand, traffic comes from four directions, turning cars (including those turning "right on red") must be dealt with, and lights and signs must be searched for and interpreted correctly. The skills needed to walk safely through an intersection are too complex for most preschoolers. The foundation for these skills, however, can be laid by teaching youngsters safe midblock crossing behaviors. With developmental growth, preschoolers can eventually apply what they have learned about midblock crossings to intersections. The last book in the WITS series, intended for five-and-one-half-year olds, capitalizes on this earlier training and introduces the concepts involved in crossing at an intersection.

Finally, there is the very real fact of life that even during planned trips, we sometimes choose to cross the street midblock. This is especially true when the corner is some distance away.

Learning to cross the street safely midblock can be a child's most important first lesson in learning pedestrian safety.

LESSON 1: Where Is The Street?

Storybook 1 is intended for children under age two. Even though most youngsters in your class will be familiar with the ideas presented in this book, we suggest that you use this introductory book to ensure that all children have a common level of understanding.

This first book in the series helps children learn to label different parts of the traffic environment: yard, sidewalk, curb, street, car, van, and bus. The child in the story, shown playing peek-a-boo with his father, demonstrates that he has learned the names for these traffic-related places and objects. Safe areas near traffic are introduced first, more dangerous places and vehicles later.

Lesson Goal:

Children will be able to identify and name selected parts of the traffic environment.

Questions to Ask:

While reading the storybook aloud to your students, see if they can answer questions such as:

- Who can point out the yard? The sidewalk? The curb? The street? The van? The bus? The boy? The father?
- What's this a picture of (pointing to one of the drawings)?
- Did the little boy really lose these objects?
- Does your yard (car, van, etc.) look like the one in this picture? What does your yard (car, van, etc.) look like?
- What parts do all cars have? What do cars do?

Activities to Accompany the Lesson:

- During outdoor play and field trips, repeat traffic-related vocabulary words for new objects and places as well as those covered in the book. Label traffic lights and median strips. Even if children are not familiar with these terms, they can begin to develop a significant traffic-related vocabulary.
- Lead a group discussion about the traffic area around the school or center. Ask students to point to the yard, sidewalk, and street areas.
- Ask the children to cut or tear out from magazines pictures of yards, cars, streets, etc. Then display these pictures under appropriate labels on a bulletin board. Hold a contest to vote for the favorite yard, car, etc. As each child votes, he or she should give a reason for his or her choice.

Skills to Work on:

This book focuses on labeling important items in traffic. To strengthen labeling skills:

- Make traffic safety labeling a carryover to other labeling activities. You might label other objects in the room, such as tables, chairs, coat rack, etc. Even though youngsters can't yet read, they can get used to seeing these words in print.

- Have children identify objects by their use. Give children practice using traffic and non-traffic related words.

  Examples: What do mommies drive to work in (Cars, buses, trucks, vans, motorcycles)

  What separates the street from a sidewalk? (A curb)

  What do people use to hold a drink? (Cup, glass, mug)

- Play the peek-a-boo game shown in the story, using traffic and non-traffic-related places and objects.
- Play the "I see something. . ." game in which verbal clues are given to identify an object and the child guesses what it is.

  Example: I see something yellow that has lots of windows and big tires. What do I see? (School bus)

Parent Coordination:

- Distribute copies of the Parent Handout Sheets to the parents of children in your class.
- Ask parents to continue labeling activities at home. Encourage them to add as many new words as they and their child feel comfortable with.
- Ask parents who have cameras to take pictures of the traffic environment near their home. Put these photos in a class scrapbook.
- Suggest to parents that as they walk to and from the school or center they label traffic-related objects and places for their child.

Checklist:

(To be completed with individual students or for the group as a whole)

To make sure that the children in your class can perform the learning objectives presented in Storybook 1, determine whether they can do the following:

(1) Identify these places/objects by pointing to them:

- **yard** ☐
- **sidewalk** ☐
- **curb** ☐
- **street** ☐
- **car** ☐
- **van** ☐
- **bus** ☐

(2) Identify these places/objects by naming them:

- **yard** ☐
- **sidewalk** ☐
- **curb** ☐
- **street** ☐
- **car** ☐
- **van** ☐
- **bus** ☐

LESSON 2: Streets Are for Cars

This storybook introduces children to the concept of boundaries and the idea that there are separate places for vehicles and people. The storybook stresses that children should enter vehicle spaces only when they are accompanied by a grown-up.

Lesson Goal:

Children will be able to identify and distinguish between places that are safe for children and places where vehicles are likely to be.

Questions to Ask:

After group or individual readings of the storybook, see whether children can answer questions such as these:

- What's happening in this picture? What are the children doing? What are the grown-ups doing?
- Do children or cars belong in parks (alleys, driveways, etc.)?
- Why do people have to go into spaces that are meant for cars? Do cars ever have to go into spaces that are meant for people?
- What should you do when you want to cross a street or driveway? Are there any rules to follow? What if you have to go into a space for cars and you are by yourself?
- Why is it necessary to have a grown-up with you when you cross a street, alley, driveway, or parking lot?

Activities to Accompany the Lesson:

- Using the pictures of buses, vans, and cars displayed on the bulletin board for the labeling activity conducted in Storybook 1, have the children decide in which areas these objects should go—people spaces or vehicle spaces.
- Ask the children to tear or cut out pictures of other areas that are intended for children, such as schoolyards, playgrounds, or campsites. Repeat the activity for car places, cutting out pictures of garages, gas stations, tunnels, etc.
- On walks, encourage children to point out places that are meant for cars and those that are intended for children and grown-ups.
- Make sure that the boundaries for outdoor play at the school or center are well defined. If possible, a fence or rope should be erected to make these boundaries physical rather than mental. Reinforce the idea that this area—like some of the areas noted in the storybook—is a safe place for children to walk and play.
- Lead a class discussion in which the group works out the proper procedure for children to follow if they want to enter an area in which cars are found.
- When using other books in the library corner, have children point out illustrations of areas that are safe for children and areas that are meant for cars.

Skills to Work on:

This storybook focuses on the idea that certain places are safe for walking and playing and other places are not. In these latter places cars can be found. To strengthen a child's understanding of the concept of boundaries, try these ideas:

- Label areas in the classroom—the library corner, the water play area, the blocks area, etc. Discuss with the children why each of these areas has its own "space."
- When outside with the class, label areas other than those related to the traffic environment, a shopping mall, a drive-in theater, a picnic area, a ball field, etc.
- Ask students to discuss whether they have an area in their home that is considered "theirs"—like a bedroom, a play area, a particular seat at the dining room table. How do they know that this area is for their use? How do they know where this area begins and ends (its boundaries)?

Parent Coordination:

- Distribute copies of the Parent Handout Sheets to the parents of children in your class.
- Suggest that in trips to and from the school or center parents review with the children areas in which it is safe to walk and areas that are unsafe because of the presence of cars and other vehicles. If parents cross a roadway in walking to the school, point out that this is a good opportunity to review the ideas that (1) sometimes people have to enter vehicle spaces, and (2) when children must do this, they need to cross with a grown-up.

Checklist:

(To be completed with individual students or for the group as a whole.)

Children are able to say or point out that—

- Yards are places where children can play ☐
- Playgrounds are places where children can play ☐
- Parks are places where children can play ☐
- Sidewalks are places where children can play ☐
- Streets are places for cars and other vehicles ☐
- Alleys are places for cars and other vehicles ☐
- Driveways are places for cars and other vehicles ☐
- Parking lots are places for cars and other vehicles ☐
- Children should cross the street only when they are holding hands with a grown-up ☐
- Children should walk in alleys only when they are holding hands with a grown-up ☐
- Children should walk in driveways only when they are holding hands with a grown-up ☐
- Children should walk in parking lots only when they are holding hands with a grown-up ☐

LESSON 3: A Walk with Mommy

This storybook presents an overview of the basic procedure for crossing the street safely from a midblock point. The little girl in the story shows her mother that she knows how to walk on the sidewalk and cross the street safely. The following steps are introduced to the reader: (1) holding a grown-up's hand, (2) stopping at the curb, (3) looking for moving cars, (4) checking for moving cars again, if any have passed, and (5) crossing when no cars are present. An activity wheel at the end of the book points out that everyone, even grandmothers and doctors, must stop and look for moving cars before crossing the street.

Lesson Goal:

Students will be able to state and follow the basic procedure for safely crossing the street from a midblock position where no parked cars are present.

Questions to Ask:

In reading the storybook to the youngsters in your class, see whether they can answer these questions:

- Who can point to a picture of a yard? A street? A curb? A car?
- Who can point to a space that is safe for children to walk? To play? Where are the car spaces?
- Why does the little girl cross the street with her mommy?
- What does the little girl do before she crosses the street? What steps does she follow?
- Why do the little girl and her mother check for cars in *both* directions before crossing the street?
- How do you check to see whether a car is coming down the street? How can you be sure that it has passed?
- Who can find the doctor (letter carrier, construction worker, father and son, grandparent, etc.) shown in the activity wheel somewhere else in this book?

Activities to Accompany the Lesson:

- When on field trips, playground excursions, etc., practice the basic crossing procedure: stop at the curb, wait for cars to pass, check again for cars, and then cross. You may wish to label the checking step as looking "left-right-left," but make sure that the youngsters understand the actions involved. Comprehending directional terms will be too advanced for most two- and three-year-olds. Try to practice the crossing sequence with individual children so that they understand that these steps for safe crossing apply to individuals, not just groups.
- While reading books housed in the school or center library, point out illustrations of people crossing the street and discuss with the class what is taking place. If children are shown crossing the street by themselves, discuss the dangers of this approach.

Skills to Work on:

Two skills are introduced in this storybook that youngsters need to practice: (1) stopping at a desired point, and (2) tracking moving objects.

To practice stopping, several games can be helpful—for instance:

- While the group is together, tell the children that during the day you will periodically clap your hands twice (give a sample clap). Whenever they hear you clap this way, they are to stop whatever they are doing and "freeze" their actions.
- While listening to records, agree on a chorus or instrument sound that can be designated to mean "stop." Have the children dance, do calisthenics, or play to the music. When the agreed-upon sound is heard, the children should freeze their movements.

Adults track an object's movement using only the eyes, but young children need to kinesthetically "feel" the movement that is taking place by using their head, arms, and other parts of the body. To help children do this:

- Designate a moving object to be followed, such as a fish in a tank of water, a ball being tossed, a bird flying, etc. Squat down to the children's height and point your arm toward the object being followed. Have a child place his or her arm next to yours. Together, follow the object, gradually letting the child take the lead in this activity.
- Repeat the above activity at a street curb. This time designate a car, bus, or van to be followed. To ensure that the children are able to master this technique, try this activity on a one-to-one basis.

Parent Coordination:

- Distribute copies of the Parent Handout Sheets to the parents of children in your class.
- Let parents know the importance of modeling correct crossing behavior. Urge them to follow the sequence outlined in this book, and to discuss what they are doing with their children as they walk.

Checklist:

(To be completed with individual students or the class as a whole)

In accompanying the teacher on a walk, child is able to:

- Let teacher or other adult hold his or her hand ..... ☐
- Stop at curb ..... ☐
- Look for moving cars before entering street ..... ☐
- Watch and wait for moving car to pass ..... ☐
- Check for other moving cars if any were sighted ..... ☐
- Keep checking for moving cars while crossing the street ..... ☐

LESSON 4: Super Scott and Super Spot

As in Storybook 3, Storybook 4 concentrates on the basic sequence of crossing the street midblock. These skills are highlighted: stopping at the curb, looking for moving cars, and holding a grown-up's hand while crossing. In this story, the main character discovers that accidents can happen when safe crossing rules are not followed.

Lesson Goal:

Children will be able to (1) demonstrate safe crossing behavior from a midblock point that is not between parked cars, and to (2) relate what the consequences of not following safe crossing procedures might be.

Questions to Ask:

In discussing this storybook with your children, see whether they can answer questions such as these:

- Did Scott know how to cross the street safely? What steps did he follow?
- Did Super Spot know how to get across the street safely?
- Why was the dog run over? Could Scott have done anything to save him? Could his mother? Could the driver of the car? Would anyone have been able to stop the accident from happening?
- When is it OK to play "make believe" like Scott did? Is it dangerous to act this way when you're walking near traffic?
- What should you do if you're walking with a pet? Is there anything extra that you can do to make sure your pet is safe?

Activities to Accompany the Lesson:

- Help the children develop a plan for walking safely with a pet outdoors. Even children who don't have a pet can help formulate plans and critique them.
- While outdoors, have the children observe the behavior of dogs and cats near traffic. What could the children do to keep the animals safer?
- On walks with the class, point out streets that have a line down the middle, explaining that this was painted on the street to separate cars going in different directions. Let them know that because on most streets cars can go both ways, we must look in both directions (and back again) before crossing. Give the youngsters opportunities to practice looking for cars in both directions.
- Direct the youngsters to practice looking left - right - left (without necessarily labeling these terms) for oncoming cars every time they are at a roadway. However, don't let the sequence become so routine that the youngsters automatically turn their heads without really scanning for traffic.

Skills to Work on:

The most important concept introduced in this lesson is that of cause and effect. Because the dog did not follow the safe crossing rules that Scott and his mother observed, he was run over by a car. Children need to understand that the consequences of unsafe crossing behavior can be very grave indeed. To develop this skill, have children play a "What if" game during storytelling time. For example, have them answer the following questions:

—What if I forgot to put water in the goldfish bowl. . .

—What if I wore a snowsuit during the summer. . .

—What if I didn't have anything to eat for three days. . .

—What if the sun didn't come up in the morning. . .

Another idea that is intrinsic to mastering this lesson is paying attention. Children need to be attuned to the dangers of traffic to discern when it is safe to cross the street. To improve children's attention skills, try playing a game in which children must focus their attention on an object. For instance, if you have a puppet stage (or table), make a puppet figure suddenly appear and then disappear from it. Ask the children to clap their hands when they see the puppet appear and to stop clapping when the figure disappears. Repeat this exercise using smaller and smaller objects.

A final concept emphasized in this book is how to distinguish between reality and fantasy. To help children do this, try the following:

- Read several stories from children's literature, such as Snow White, Cinderella, Rapunzel, etc. Ask the children to distinguish which parts of the story seem like they could happen in real life and which parts seem like they are imagined, or too improbable to take place.
- Lead the class in a discussion of their favorite TV shows. What do they like about these shows? Are there any parts of the shows that seem "make believe" to them? What parts of the shows seem realistic?
- Show the children pictures of things that could *not* happen, e.g., people flying, dogs driving cars, etc. Show the class pictures of real life events. Ask the children to label the pictures "real" or "pretend."

Parent Coordination:

- Distribute copies of the Parent Handout Sheets to the parents of children in your class.
- At a parent meeting or in a newsletter, present parents with "tips" for safe walking behavior. Encourage parents to share their own experiences in this area.

Checklist:

(To be conducted with individual children or the class as a whole)

Children are able to:

- State in their own words why it is important to follow safe walking procedures . . . . . ☐
- Tell what an appropriate safe crossing sequence includes . . . . . ☐
- Lead the teacher through the basic safe crossing procedure from a midblock location on a road with an unobstructed view . . . . . ☐
- State the possible consequences of unsafe walking behavior . . . . . ☐

LESSON 5: The Car Game

This storybook gives youngsters instructions on how to look and listen for these signs that might indicate a car is about to move: (1) a driver in the car, (2) motor sounds, (3) red rear lights, (4) moving wheels, (5) forward or backward motion of the car, and (6) blinking turn signals. The little girl in the story teaches these signs to her grandmother and the other children in the book through a special game.

Lesson Goal:

Children will be able to name and point to signs that indicate a parked car is about to move.

Questions to Ask:

While reading and re-reading this book, ask the children questions such as these:

- Can you tell me what signs are shown in this book that tell you that a car is about to move?
- How can you tell when a driver is in a car? That the motor is running? That the rear lights are on? That the wheels are turning? That the car is in motion? That the turn signal is blinking?
- Do you have to see **all** these signs to know that a car is going to move? How many signs do you need to see?
- Why do you have to check a parked car before you walk in front of it? Do you have to check behind a parked car as well?
- Look at this picture (as you point to one of the pictures on the review page). Where in the storybook did we already learn about this sign?

Activities to Accompany the Lesson:

- Help the children act out the game in the storybook as you read the story aloud. When you get to the parts about counting, walking backwards, blinking eyes, etc., ask the children to join in these actions. You may wish to ask one child to lead the class in these activities.
- Play the game outdoors also. From the sidewalk, observe a parked car that is about to drive off. As each sign of movement is detected, let the children name that sign and all the accompanying actions that were demonstrated.
- Make a chart or wall display that includes pictures of the different signs of movement shown in the storybook. Add to the chart any additional signs of movement that the children can think of, such as smoke from an exhaust pipe.
- As you walk with the children, play a game in which you pick a parked car for them to observe. Ask the children to decide whether this car is about to move or not. Ask the youngsters how they arrived at their decision. In selecting cars, be sure to select cars that are and are not about to move away. Make sure that the youngsters are able to do this exercise from various vantage points—both in front of and behind the parked cars.
- As a class project, have the children glue wood and other materials together to make a car. Make sure that this "car" includes details such as wheels, rear view lights, etc.

Skills to Work on:

The main skills required by this lesson are related to observation—learning how to listen and look critically. To enhance the youngsters' powers of observation, try these exercises:

- When the children are sitting in a circle, bring out a stuffed animal for them to study. Make sure that all of the youngsters have sufficient opportunity to look at the toy animal. After returning the animal to a bag or box that is out of the children's sight, have the children describe the animal. What color was it? How big? What did its face look like? Did it have claws?
- To work on auditory observation, take a bell from a series of bells of different sizes and ring it several times. After returning this bell to its place amongst the other bells, select three bells to ring, one of which is the original bell that was rung. Have the children vote on which of these three tones was the original bell sound that they heard. You may wish to tape record this activity so the children can verify their choice against the original sound.
- Assemble several classroom objects that have definite and familiar sounds associated with them (a clock, a timer, scissors, water dripping, a musical instrument, etc.). Then blindfold one of the youngsters in the class and direct him or her to identify the object by its sound.

Parent Cooperation:

- Ask parents to take a photograph of their family car (or the car of a neighbor or relative). Looking at this photo with their child, ask parents to discuss where people should look to detect signs of movement. Urge parents to continue this activity using pictures in magazines and storybooks. Make sure that children understand that even though cars, buses, and vans vary in appearance, we can still look for similar signs of movement in all of them.
- Distribute copies of the Parent Handout Sheets to the parents of children in your class.

Checklist:

(To be completed with the whole group or an individual student)

Children are able to:

- State where to look for a driver of a car ..... ☐
- Imitate the sound of a car's motor when it is turned on ..... ☐
- Point out the car's rear lights ..... ☐
- Show with their hands what the wheels of a car do when they move ..... ☐
- Point out the location of the turn signal on a car ..... ☐
- Describe what a turn signal does when a car is ready to move ..... ☐

Parent Handout Sheets to Accompany Storybook 1

To the Parent . . .

Reinforcing at Home What Your Child Is Learning about Traffic Safety in School

Your child is participating in the Walking In Traffic Safely (WITS) Program for Preschoolers. This series of nine storybooks teaches youngsters the fundamentals of pedestrian safety.

Storybook 1 in the WITS series, Where Is the Street?, teaches children to recognize and name various parts of the traffic environment. Children reading the storybook learn these words: yard, sidewalk, curb, street, car, van, and bus.

To help your child apply what he or she has learned about traffic safety in school to the home environment, try these activities with your child:

- Walk with your child in your neighborhood several times a week. To learn about yards, sidewalks, and streets, your child needs many opportunities to explore these places safely. Show your child **his** or **her** yard, curb, sidewalk, and street. If there is no sidewalk in front of your home, point out the grass or dirt area where people walk. Show your child your car, if you have one, or your neighbor's. Teach him or her the words for these places and objects by touching each as you say its name. **Give plenty of praise, smiles, and hugs when your child points to or says a word correctly to reward your child for learning about traffic.**

- Walk to other neighborhoods and help your child to understand that things that look slightly different from those in your own neighborhood are still called sidewalks, streets, and yards, etc.

- Take photos or pictures cut from magazines or newspapers to make a scrapbook of pictures that are like your own neighborhood. Then "read" this book together. Include pictures of driveways, parking lots, or alleys in your neighborhood as well as streets so your child can become familiar with them. Bicycles, garbage trucks, ice cream trucks, motorcycles, and other vehicles that drive down your street regularly should be included along with cars, vans, and buses.

For the Parent. . .

Facts about Toddlers in Traffic

Children age two and under are always in danger in traffic because:

- Toddlers are attracted to the sights and sounds of traffic. They like to play near cars.
- Even children who can't walk can easily crawl or waddle into traffic.
- A child's small size makes it difficult for a driver to detect a child who is playing or crawling in the street.
- Youngsters frequently enter the street on impulse, without any warning to a watching parent or drivers in the street.

What kinds of accidents involve children under two?

- One-third of all accidents happen when a child suddenly enters the road at a point in the middle of the block and is struck by a moving vehicle. The driver, whose vision was obstructed by a parked car or other obstruction, never saw the child before the accident.
- Twenty percent of accidents occur when a child is run over by a backing vehicle.
- Another major problem occurs when a child enters the street midblock and is run over by a driver who had seen the child but had not anticipated that the child would enter the street.
- Accidents at intersections and in off-roadway areas such as driveways, alleys, and parking lots occur less frequently than in roadways.

To reduce the chances of your child becoming involved in a pedestrian accident, try these ideas:

- Stay beside your child at all times when your child is outside near a roadway.
- When near a roadway, position yourself between your child and the roadway.
- Hold your child's hand when walking to or entering a roadway.
- If you cannot be with your child outside, leave your child with a responsible person.
- Provide a safe play area for your child away from roadways.

Parent Handout Sheets to Accompany Storybook 2

To the Parent. . .

Reinforcing at Home What Your Child Is Learning about Traffic Safety in School

Your child is participating in the Walking In Traffic Safely (WITS) Program for Preschoolers. This series of nine storybooks teaches youngsters the fundamentals of pedestrian safety.

Storybook 2 in the WITS series, Streets Are for Cars, teaches children that there are separate spaces for vehicles and children and that children should enter vehicle spaces only when they are with grown-ups.

To help your child apply in the home environment what he or she has learned about traffic safety in school, try these activities with your child:

- Take your child for walks in your neighborhood, pointing out the areas where vehicles belong (streets, alleys, driveways, parking lots) and areas where it is safe for children to walk and play (yards, playgrounds, parks, sidewalks).
- Make sure that your child knows where his or her safe play area is outdoors. Go over the physical boundaries with your child—a fence, wall, bushes, etc.
- Help your child understand that vehicles other than cars can also be in streets, alleys, and driveways. Point out to your child any trucks, vans, buses, mopeds, and motorcycles that you see on the roadways.
- Whenever you walk with your child near a roadway area, point out that children—like your child—must always hold onto a grown-up's hand when near traffic.

For the Parent. . .

Facts about Two-Year-Olds in Traffic

Traffic is always dangerous for a two-year-old because:

- Two-year-olds are easily distracted in traffic. Their attention span often lasts only a few seconds.
- Young children are very emotional. If they are upset or happy, they want to tell their parents. To reach a parent, they will run into the street without checking for oncoming cars.
- Youngsters have difficulty distinguishing traffic boundaries. This is especially true when a sidewalk crosses a driveway or parking lot.

What kinds of accidents are two-year-olds involved in?

- More than half of all accidents happen in the midblock area when a child who is hidden from the driver's view suddenly darts into the street in front of an approaching car. Almost always the driver was surprised by the child's sudden entry into the street.
- Thirteen percent of accidents also happen at the midblock area when a child who is in full view of the driver surprises the driver by dashing out into traffic.
- Six percent of accidents are caused by backing vehicles.
- A smaller percentage of accidents take place at intersections and in off-roadway areas such as driveways, alleys, and parking lots.

To help reduce the chances of your child becoming involved in an accident:

- Stay beside your child at all times when your child is outside near a roadway.
- When near a roadway, position yourself between your child and the roadway.
- Hold your child's hand when walking to or entering a roadway.
- If you cannot be with your child outside, leave your child with a responsible person.
- Provide a safe play area for your child away from roadways.

Parent Handout Sheets to Accompany Storybook 3

To the Parent. . .

Reinforcing at Home What Your Child Is Learning about Traffic Safety in School

Your child is participating in the Walking In Traffic Safely (WITS) Program for Preschoolers. This series of nine storybooks teaches youngsters the fundamentals of pedestrian safety.

Storybook 3 in the WITS program, A Walk with Mommy, teaches children the basic skills for crossing the street at midblock: holding hands with a parent, stopping at the curb, looking for moving cars and other vehicles, staying on the sidewalk, watching moving vehicles drive past, looking again for moving vehicles, and crossing if no moving vehicles are present.

To help your child apply in the home environment what he or she has learned about traffic safety in school, try these activities:

- Take your child on walks through your neighborhood. Always emphasize the importance of holding onto your hand.
- When you cross the street with your child, be sure to come to a complete stop at the curb. Adults can walk and look for moving vehicles in the street at the same time. Children, however, cannot do these two activities at once. So teach your child to form a habit of stopping at the curb and searching for vehicles in the street.
- When you walk in traffic with your child, point out other people who remember to stay at the curb and look for cars. Children this age are very impressionable. If they see their parents admire someone, they will try to copy that person.

For the Parent. . .

Facts about Two-and-One-Half-Year-Olds in Traffic

Youngsters walking or playing near traffic are always at risk because:

- Two-and-one-half-year-olds do not always understand what they see. It is difficult for them to understand that a car seen in the distance will appear larger as it approaches.
- Young children are very curious. A shiny object in the street can beckon them to enter a roadway.
- Two-and-one-half-year-olds characteristically go through a negative stage that applies to traffic behavior as well as everyday life. Parental instructions to walk safely are often met by a stubborn "no" from children this age.

What kinds of accidents are two-and-one-half-year-olds involved in?

- More than half of all accidents happen when children run into the street from between parked cars or other obstacles. Neither the driver involved in the accident nor the child saw the other ahead of time.
- Thirteen percent of accidents occur at midblock when a child runs into the street to the surprise of the driver who was watching the child.
- Six percent of accidents are caused by a backing vehicle.
- Intersections and off-street areas such as driveways, parking lots, and alleys pose a less serious danger to youngsters this age.

To reduce the chances of your child becoming involved in an accident:

- Stay beside your child at all times when your child is outside near a roadway.
- When near a roadway, position yourself between your child and the roadway to prevent your child from entering it.
- Hold your child's hand when walking next to or entering a roadway.
- If you cannot be with a child outside, leave your child with a responsible person.
- Provide a safe play area for your child away from roadways.

Parent Handout Sheets to Accompany Storybook 4

To the Parent. . .

Reinforcing at Home What Your Child Is Learning about Traffic Safety in School

Your child is participating in the Walking In Traffic Safely (WITS) Program for Preschoolers. This series of nine storybooks teaches youngsters the fundamentals of pedestrian safety.

Storybook 4 in the WITS series, Super Scott and Super Spot, helps your child review the basic steps in crossing the street from a midblock location. It also teaches children the dangerous consequences of not using safe crossing behaviors. Scott's dog Spot races into the street after a cat and is killed by a driver who could not stop in time to prevent the accident.

To help your child apply in the home environment what he or she has learned about traffic safety in school, try these activities with your child:

- Stop and check both ways and back again (left-right-left) for moving vehicles every time you and your child cross a street, alley, driveway, or parking lot.
- A difficult skill for young children to master is to look again for approaching cars after a car has passed. Every time you are crossing with your child and a moving vehicle passes, ask your child, "What do we do next?" to encourage him or her to remember this important step.
- If you have a family pet that goes outdoors, work out a plan with your child to keep the animal safe from traffic.

For the Parent. . .

Facts about Three-Year-Olds in Traffic

Traffic poses many dangers for the young preschooler in traffic because:

- Children feel emotions deeply. If they want to tell a parent about a joy or hurt, they may run across the street to find the parent without even glancing toward oncoming traffic.
- Youngsters tend to focus all their attention on one idea. If they see a toy in the street, they single-mindedly go after it, not thinking about moving cars.
- Three-year-olds have a difficult time distinguishing reality from fantasy. To the young child in a world of fantasy, it is hard to realize that real cars can be dangerous.

What kinds of accidents are three-year-olds involved in?

- More than half of all accidents happen when a youngster darts into traffic from a midblock location in which the child is blocked from the driver's view by parked cars or other obstacles.
- Fourteen percent of accidents happen at the midblock area when a child who is in full view of the driver surprises the driver by dashing into traffic.
- Seven percent of accidents occur at intersections.
- A smaller percentage of accidents occur in off-roadway areas such as driveways, alleys, and parking lots.

To reduce the chances of your child becoming involved in a pedestrian accident:

- Stay beside your child at all times when your child is outside near a roadway.
- When near a roadway, position yourself between your child and the roadway to prevent your child from entering it.
- Hold your child's hand when walking next to or entering a roadway.
- Provide a safe play area for your child away from roadways.
- If you cannot be with a child outside, leave your child with a responsible person.

Parent Handout Sheets to Accompany Storybook 5

To the Parent. . .

Reinforcing at Home What Your Child Is Learning about Traffic Safety in School

Your child is participating in the Walking In Traffic Safely (WITS) Program for Preschoolers. This series of nine storybooks teaches youngsters the fundamentals of pedestrian safety.

Storybook 5 in the WITS series, The Car Game, teaches children to look and listen for the following indications that a parked car is about to move: (1) a driver in the car, (2) motor sounds, (3) red rear lights, (4) moving wheels, (5) forward or backward motion of the car, (6) blinking turn signals.

To help your child apply in the home environment what he or she has learned about traffic safety in school, try these activities:

- Take your child on several walks throughout your neighborhood—to the street in front of your house, a street on a neighboring block, a parking lot, a driveway, etc. At each spot, have your child point to parked vehicles. Discuss with your child how he or she knows that these vehicles are parked and what signs would be present if they were about to move.
- When you are in the family car, review with your child what you must do to make the parked car move. Make sure that your child understands that what a driver does on the inside of a car makes a visible sign of movement on the outside of the car. (For example, turning on the ignition makes the motor make a "rrmm" sound.)
- Let your child help you wash the family car. As you clean various parts of the car, review these parts and their functions. For instance, in washing the tail lights, talk with your child about how these lights blink on and off when the car is ready to move.

For the Parent. . .

Facts about Three-and-a-Half-Year-Olds in Traffic

A child at three-and-one-half is not safe when walking or playing alone near traffic because:

- Three-and-one-half-year-olds like to test boundaries. In traffic situations and in other areas, they like to "see how much they can get away with."
- Youngsters this age think they know more than they actually do about safe crossing behaviors.
- Preschoolers are highly emotional. Emotions often take precedence over using safe crossing skills.

What kinds of accidents are three-and-one-half-year-olds involved in?

- Fifty-four percent of all accidents occur when the child, blocked from the driver's view by a parked car or other obstruction, suddenly darts into traffic. Neither the driver nor the child involved in the accident was aware of the other until it was too late to prevent a collision.
- Fourteen percent of accidents take place in the midblock area when a child who is seen by a driver of a car surprises the driver by dashing out into the street.
- Other accidents take place less frequently in intersections and in off-street areas such as parking lots, driveways, and alleys.

To reduce the chances of your child becoming involved in a pedestrian accident:

- Stay beside your child at all times when your child is outside near a roadway.
- When near a roadway, position yourself between your child and the roadway.
- Hold your child's hand when walking to or entering a roadway.
- If you cannot be with your child outside, leave your child with a responsible person.
- Provide a safe play area for your child away from roadways.

For more information:

Office of State Program Assistance, NTS-30
The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

☆ GPO : 1985 O - 488-431 : QL 3

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